

4 URBAN HOUSES

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Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Architecture

Hans C. Rott

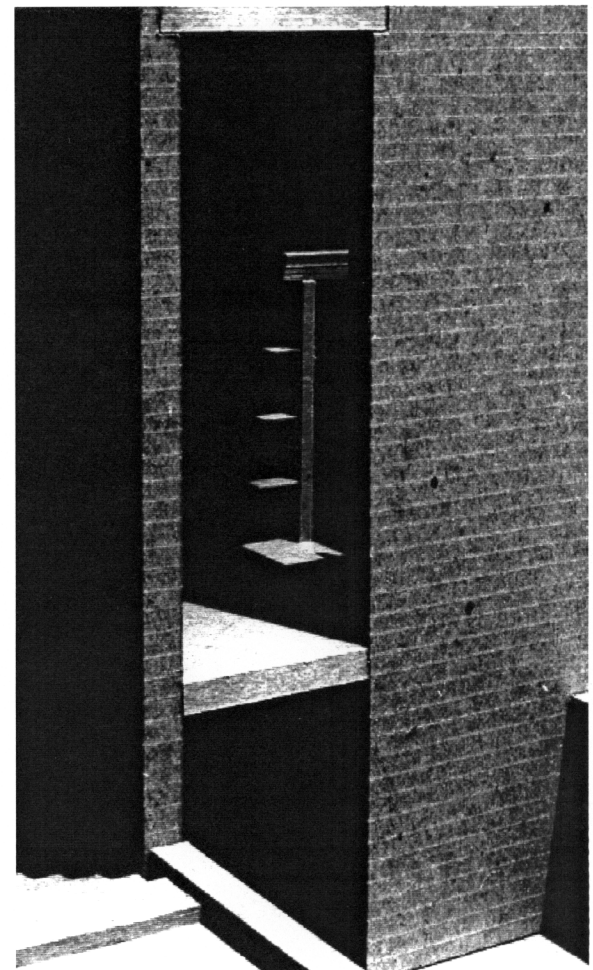
Hans C. Rott

Robert J. Dunay

R.J. Dunay

Frank Weiner

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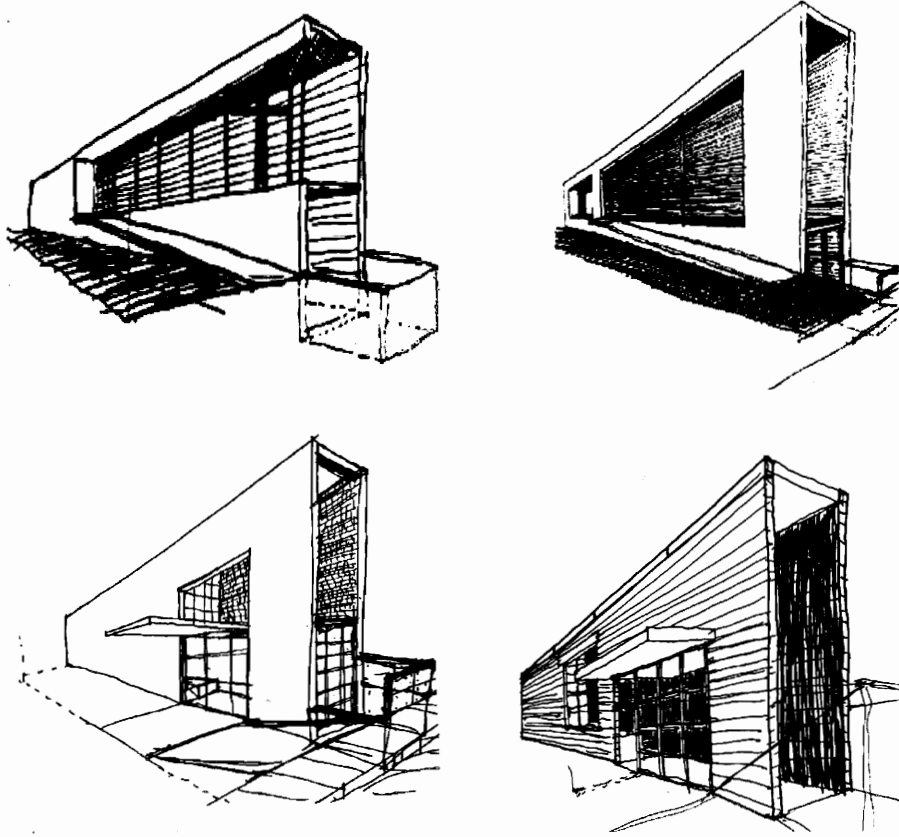
This thesis is a search for a position about architecture. The position which I have been exploring is found in the simplicity of the forms, geometry and conditions in the architecture of the Shakers and the Ticino architects in Switzerland. The formal simplicity of this architecture allows for a clarity in the relationship between light, construction and space. This position is investigated through the design of four contiguous houses which are one point "...in the slow unfolding of form."

This project looks at autonomous architecture and its generation as the manipulation of simple geometries. Inherent in the idea of architectural autonomy is the notion of architecture as an object of pure form. As formal objects, these houses explore the ability of architecture to be generated from within. However, realizing that form and geometry alone do not necessarily equal architecture, these houses find architecture within the complex relationships between geometry, light, space and construction.

Abstract

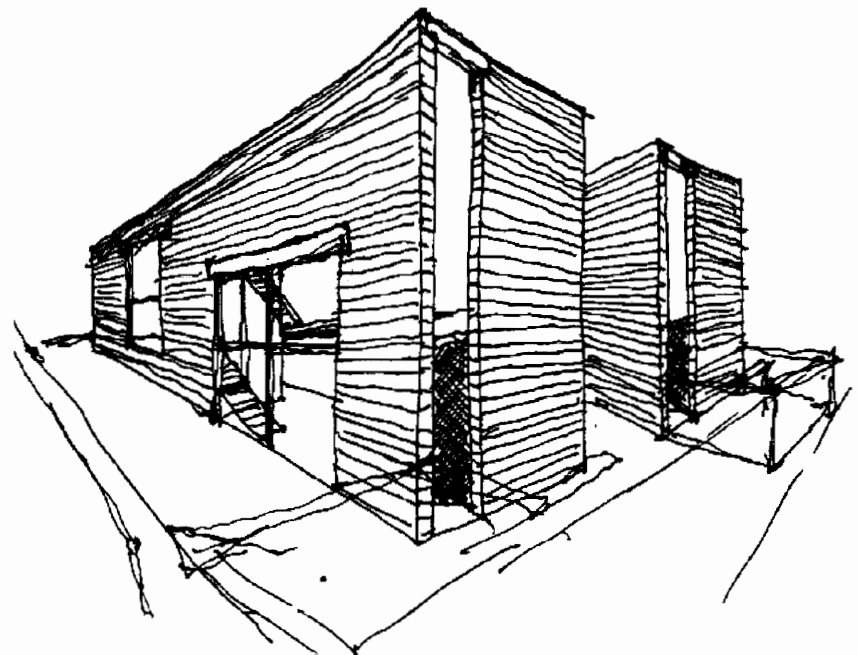


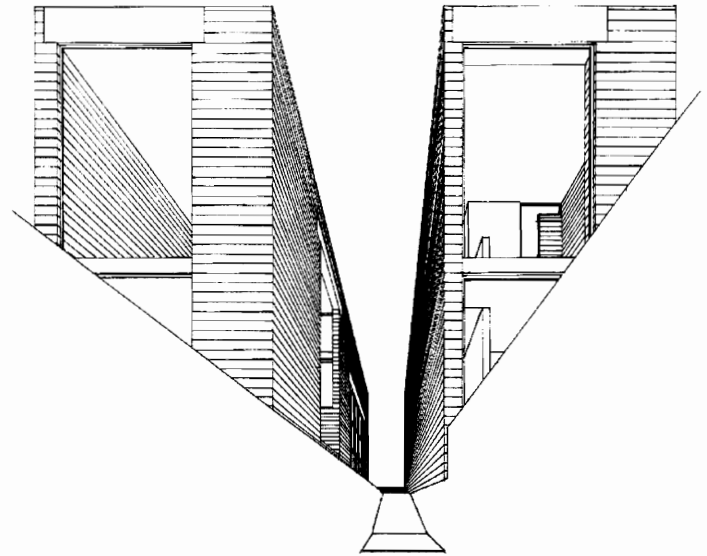
Kahn: ...Every man has...has a figure in his work who he feels answerable to. I often say, often to myself, “How’m I doing, Corbusier?” You see, Corbusier was my teacher. I say, Paul Cret was my teacher and Corbusier was my teacher. And...I have learned not to do as they did, not to...*imitate*. I would say-imitate?-but to derive out of their spirit, to derive out of their spirit. I don’t want to say *what* was derived, because it hurts; *derive*-it’s very strong, *derive* is powerful if not.... They invent, what would that be? -*derive* is a verb?-and *derived* too is a verb-English is not my subject. But what I’ve told you, isn’t really written very much anywhere-I mean, some of this, but the more personal things which have not...I just told you, Cret, Corbusier... **Interviewer:** You were talking about how, with Cret and Corbusier, you learned not to know how to do *what* they did, not to imitate them, but to derive from their work... **Kahn:** Derive from...*derive* is not the word, really-but *sense their spirit*.



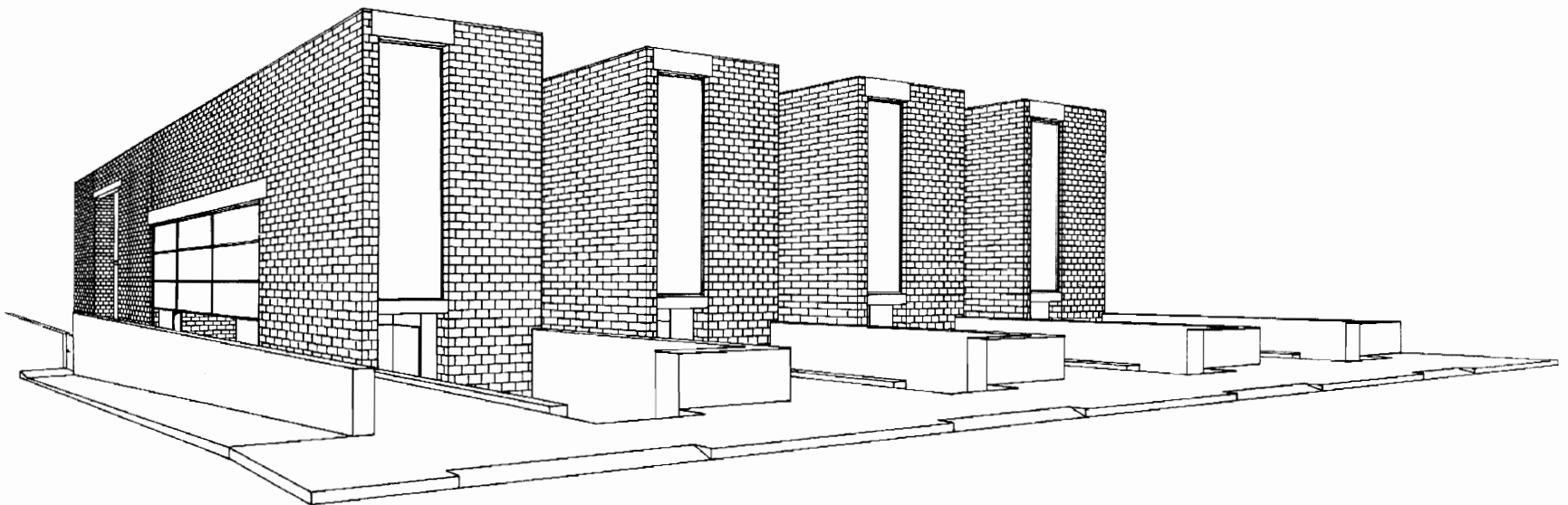
The four houses are built in an urban area located between a residential section made up of old row houses and an industrial area made up of tobacco warehouses. The character of the four houses draws from the two archetypes; the row house and the warehouse.

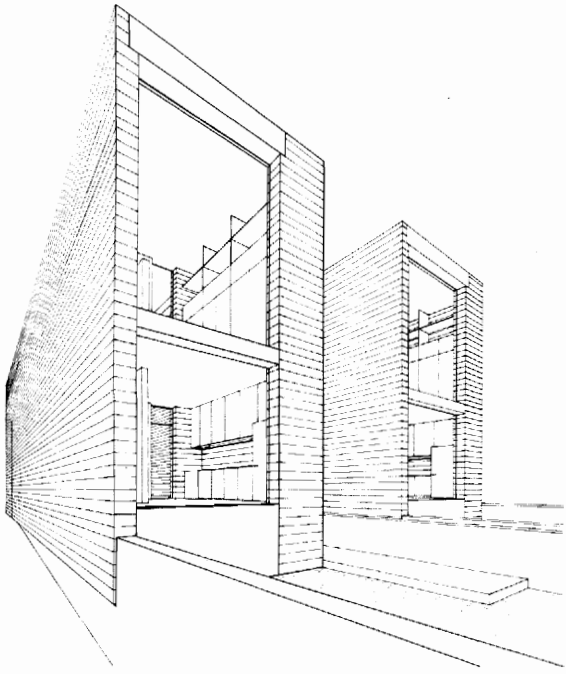
This thesis is an exploration of an architecture based on a desire for shapes of simple, pure forms determined by geometry and proportion.





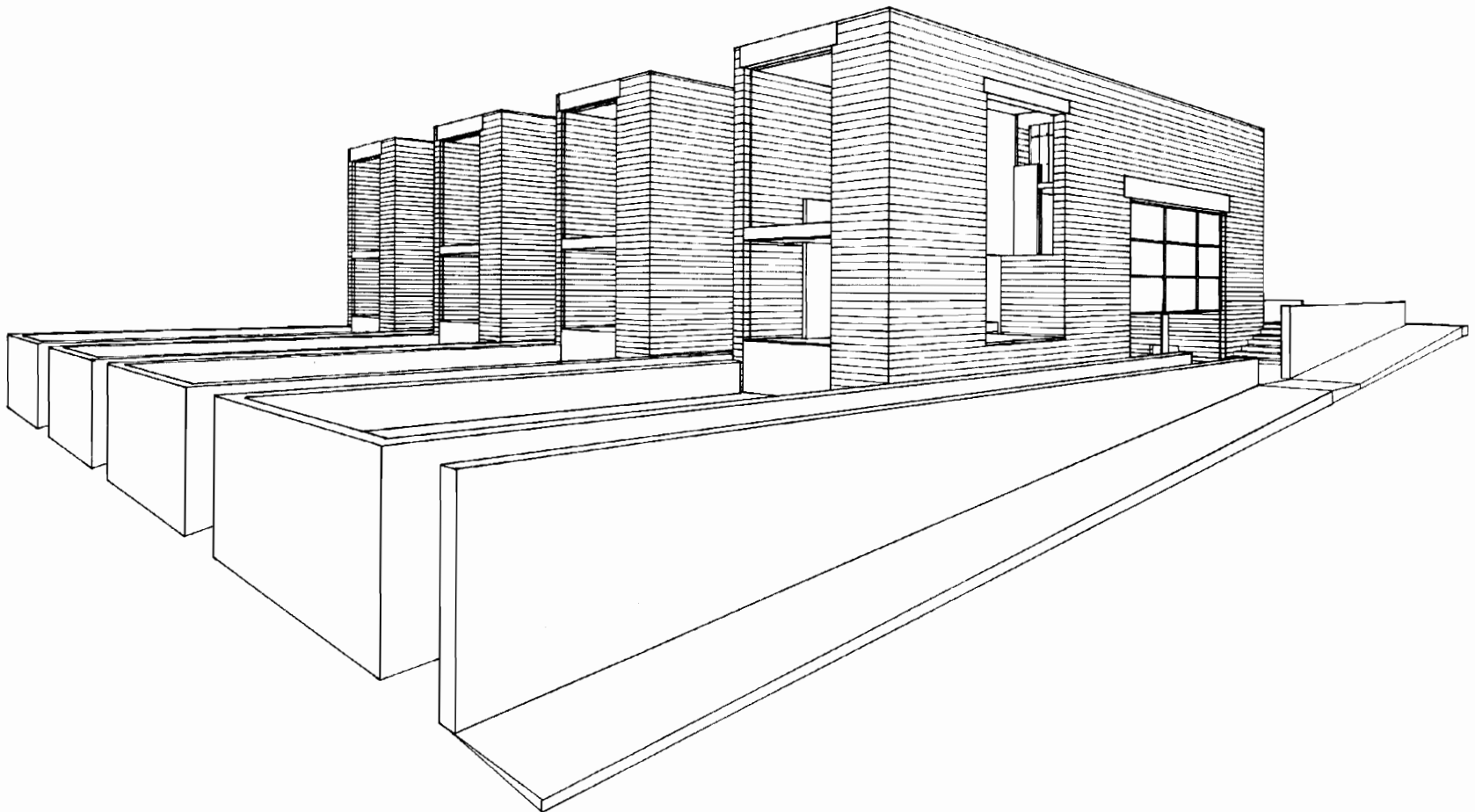
The repetition of each house creates a rhythm of solid and void that establishes a relationship between the four houses through adjacency.



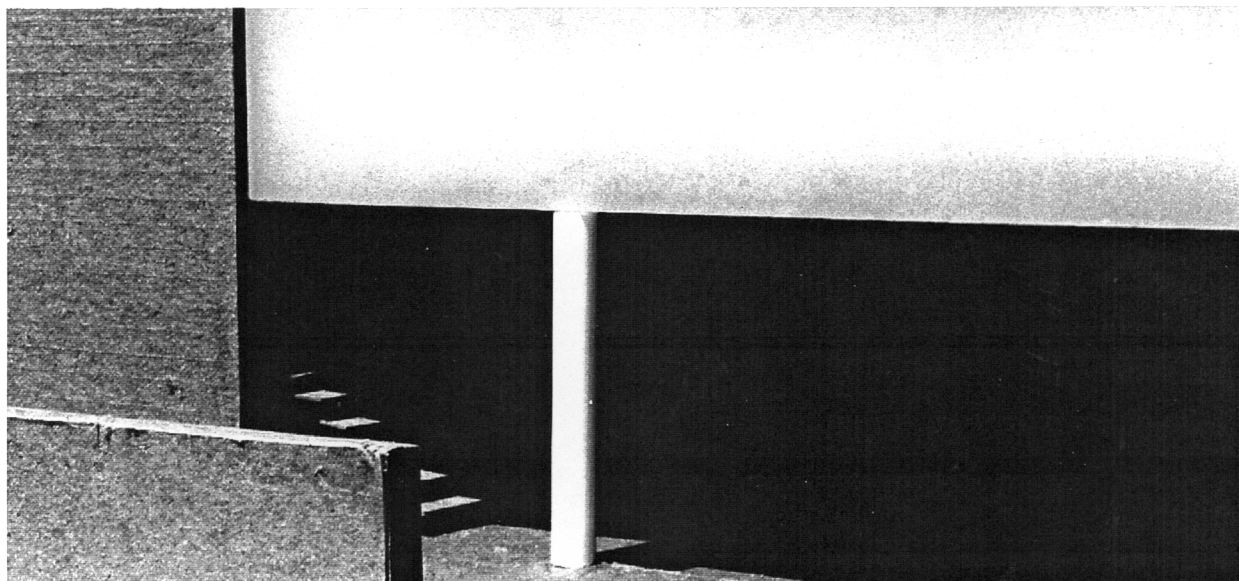
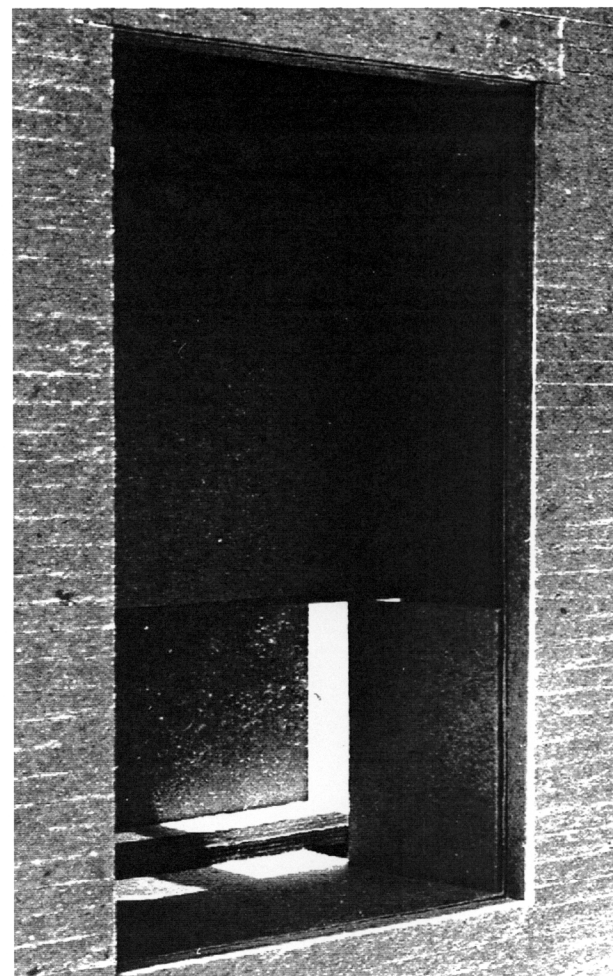


The site slopes toward an urban river which allows for the construction of four plinths which the houses sit upon. This further emphasizes their presence in the urban landscape as objects of simple, pure form.

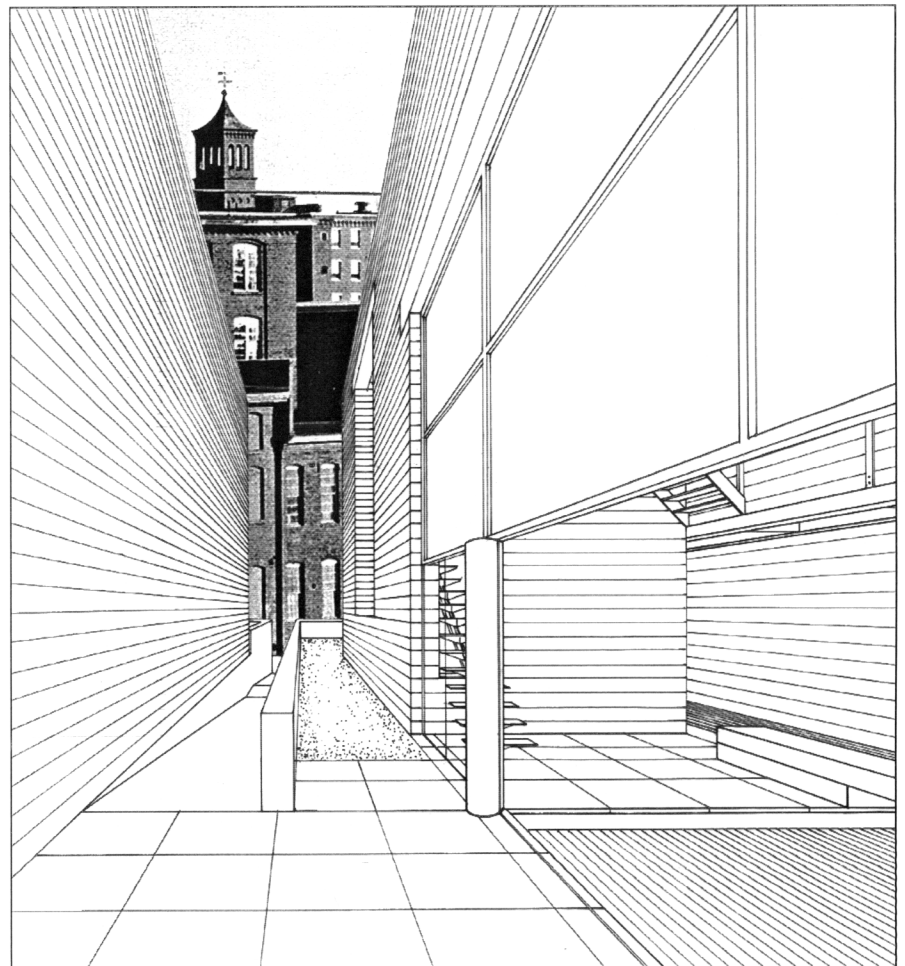
Objects of simple, pure form have an inherent beauty and clarity that satisfies a desire for order yet are not exclusive of experiential and spatial complexity.

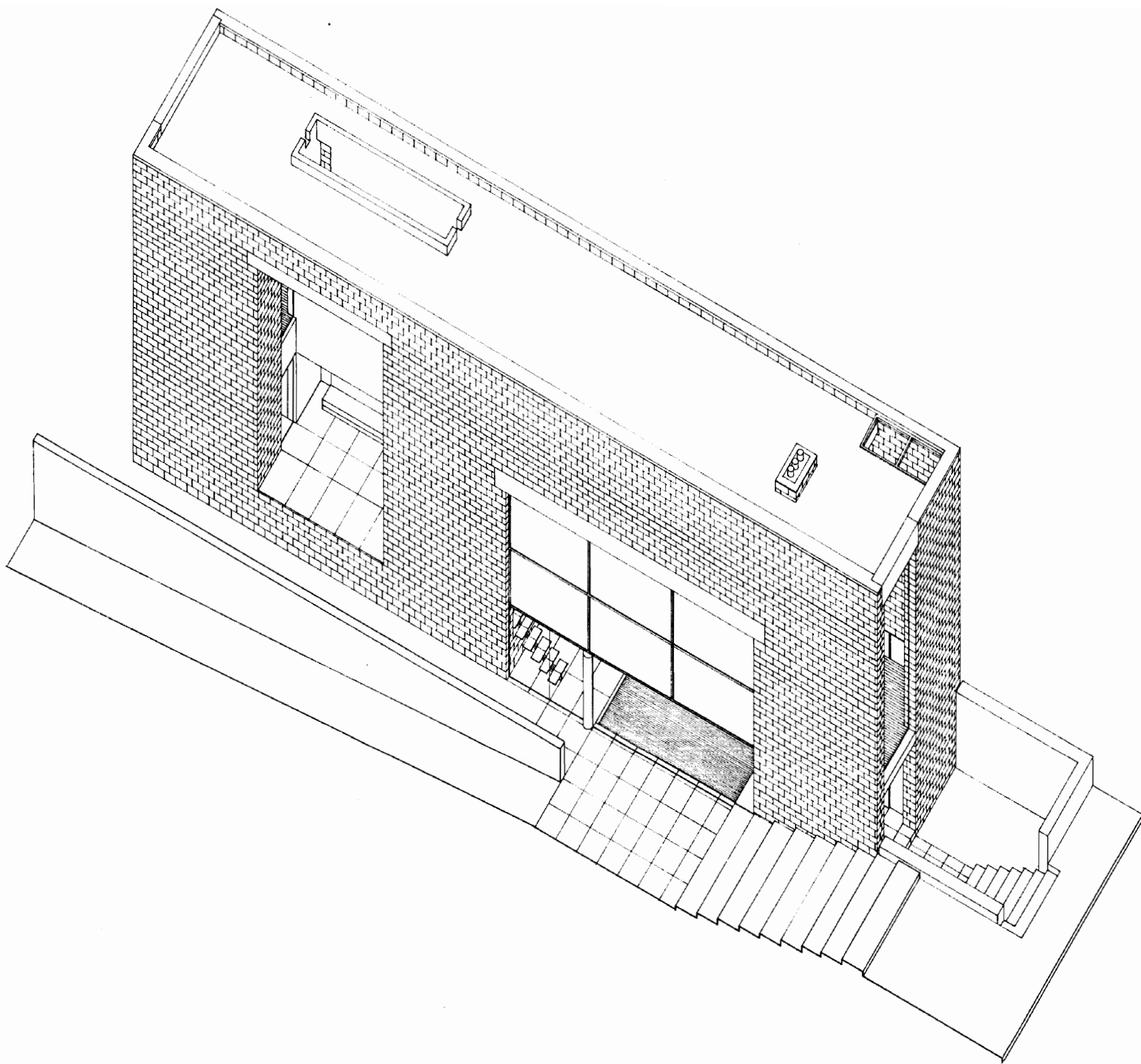


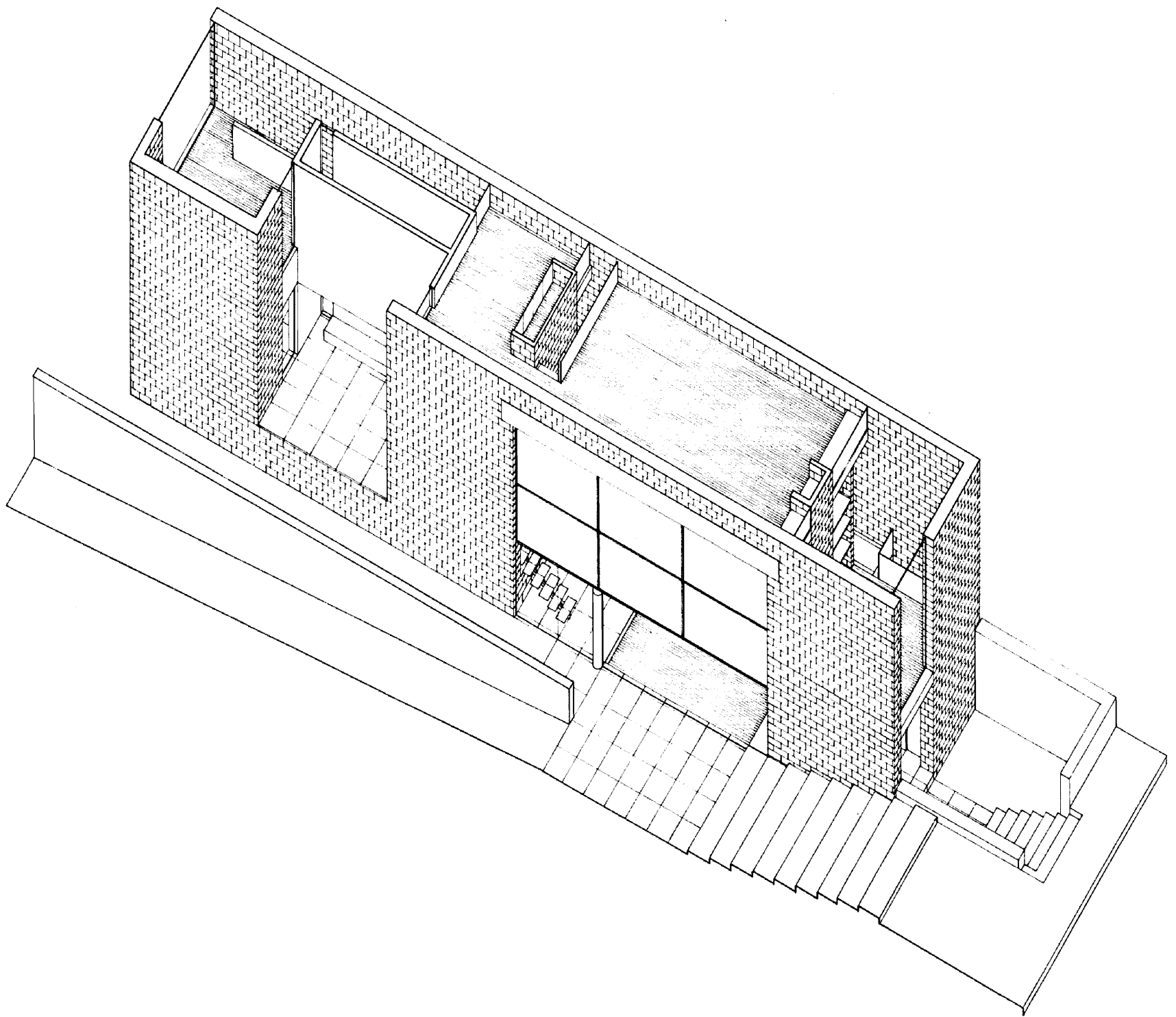
The exterior of each house is a pure rectilinear volume punctured by four openings which indicate the location of double height rooms. The double height rooms provide the basic structure around which the interior rooms are formed. The two openings on the side define the location of the two main gathering rooms; an indoor room and an outdoor terrace.

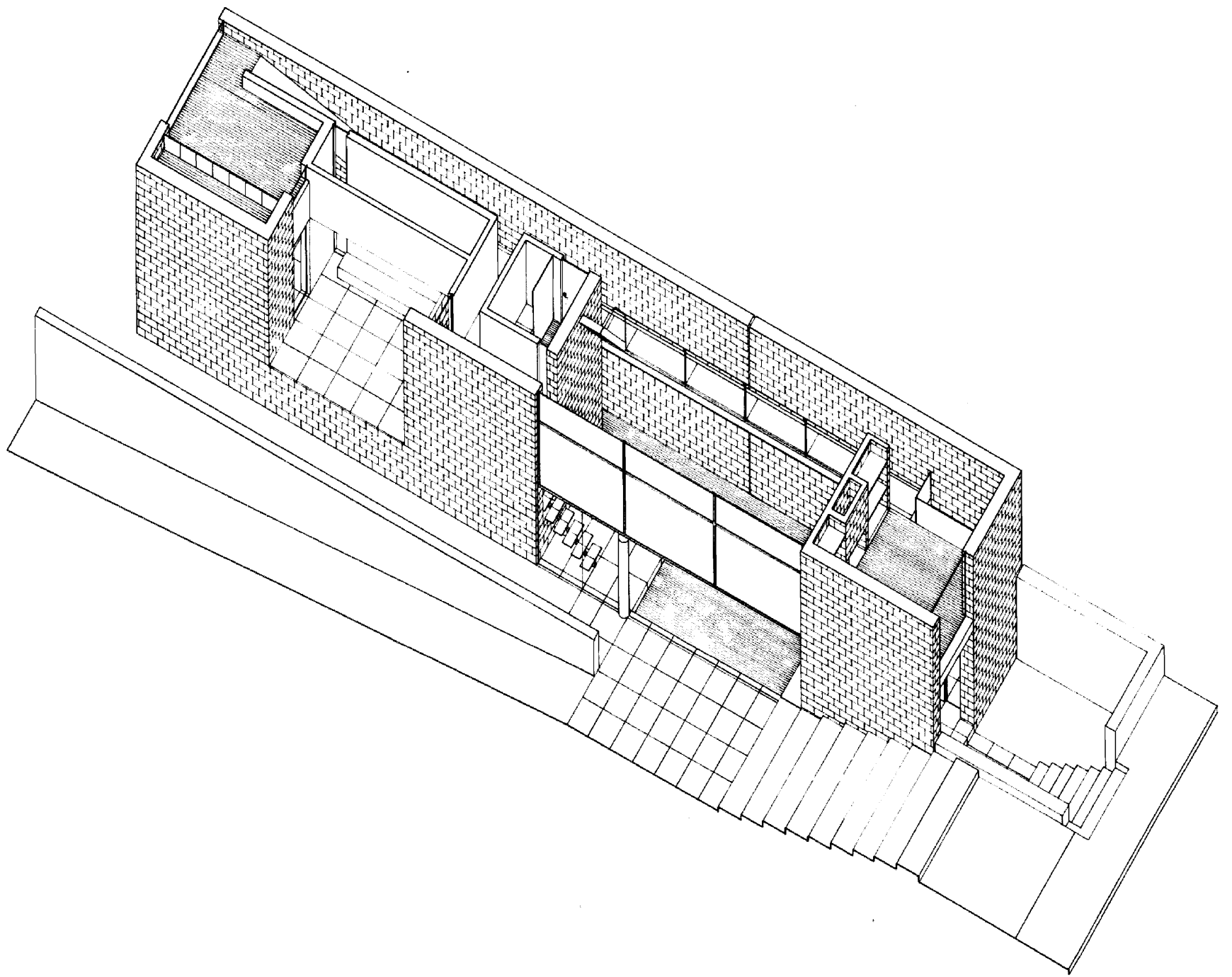


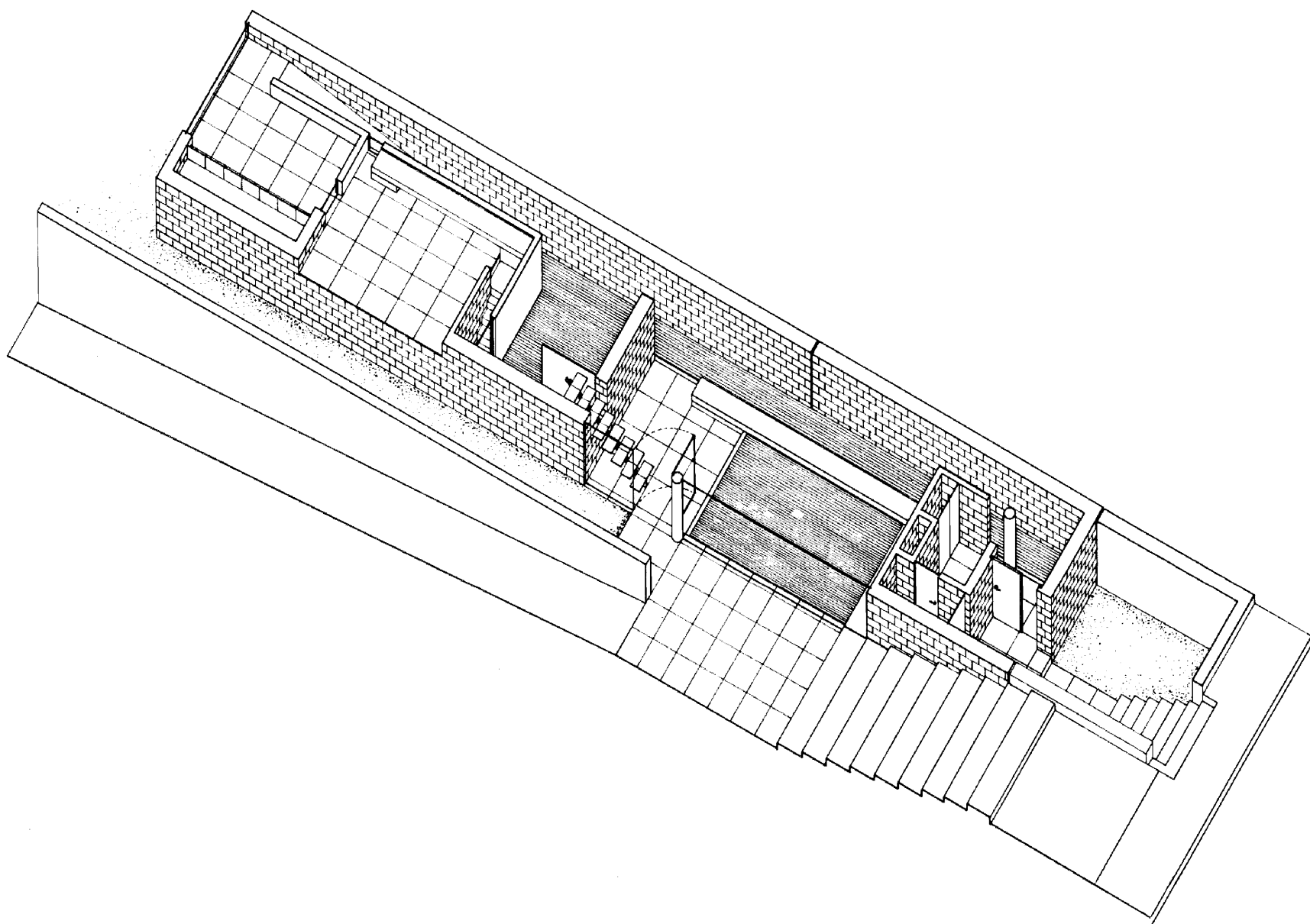
A grid of translucent glass panels is supported by a single column which marks the transition from inside to outside. The translucency of the panel grid forces the view from the interior room to the exterior room through the transparent glass below. This emphasizes their relationship as a continuous space bound by two solid parallel walls.







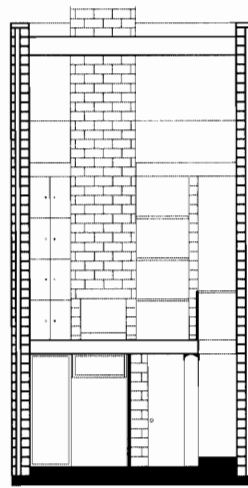
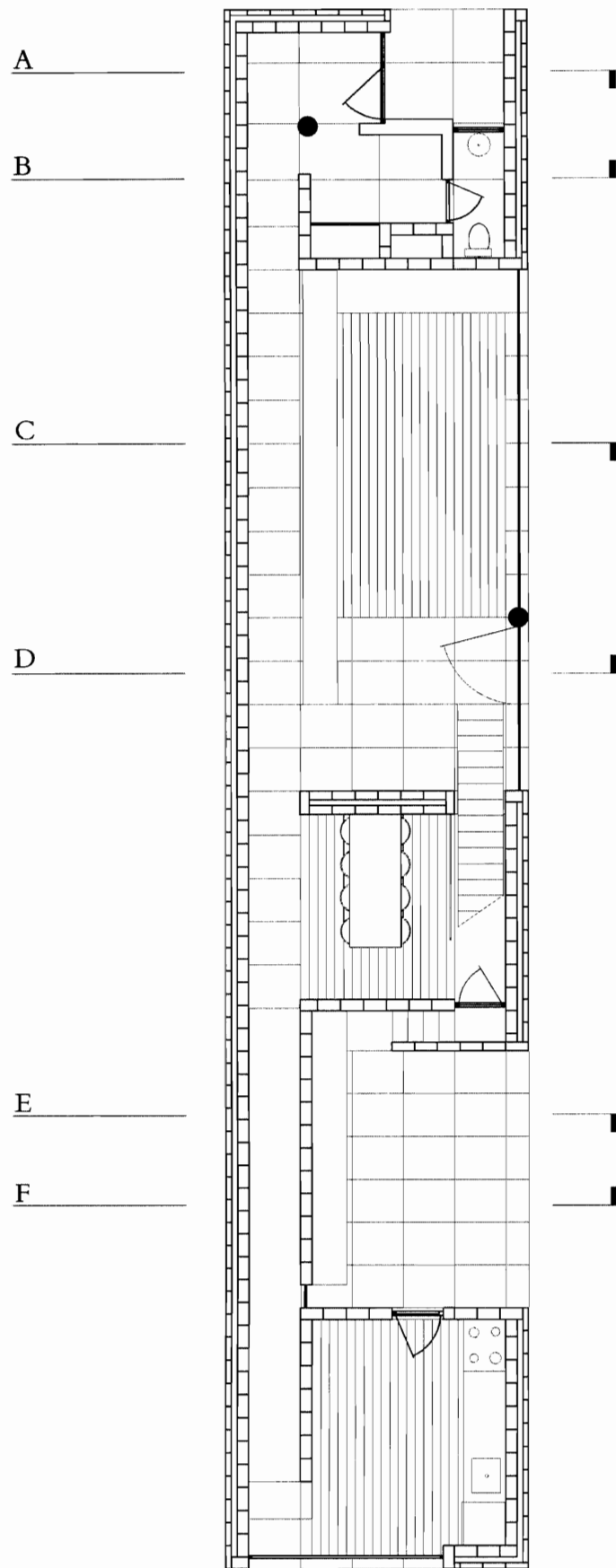




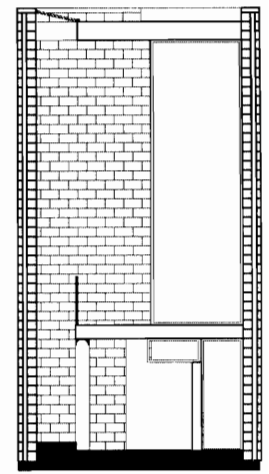


Geometry provides a rational means to concretize ideas and can form the basis of an architecture.

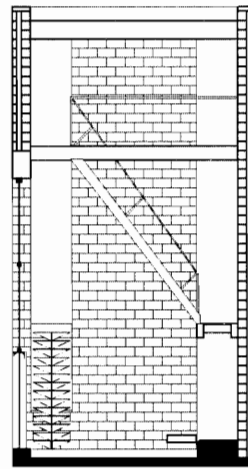
Eight parallel walls provide the basic structure for the plan of the four houses. The underlying matrix provides a control as the plan evolves.



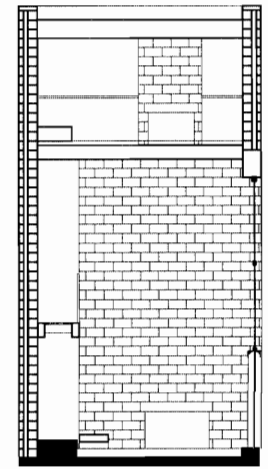
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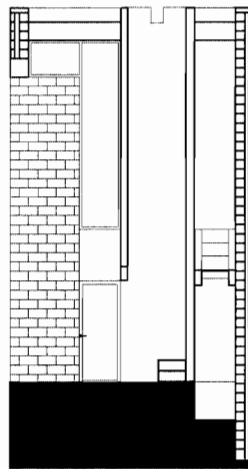
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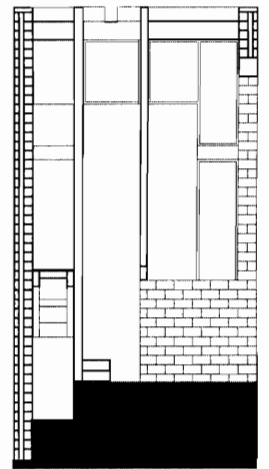
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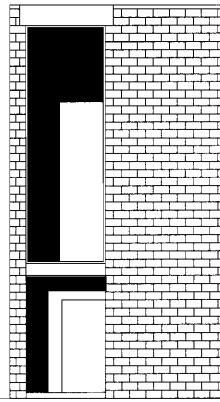
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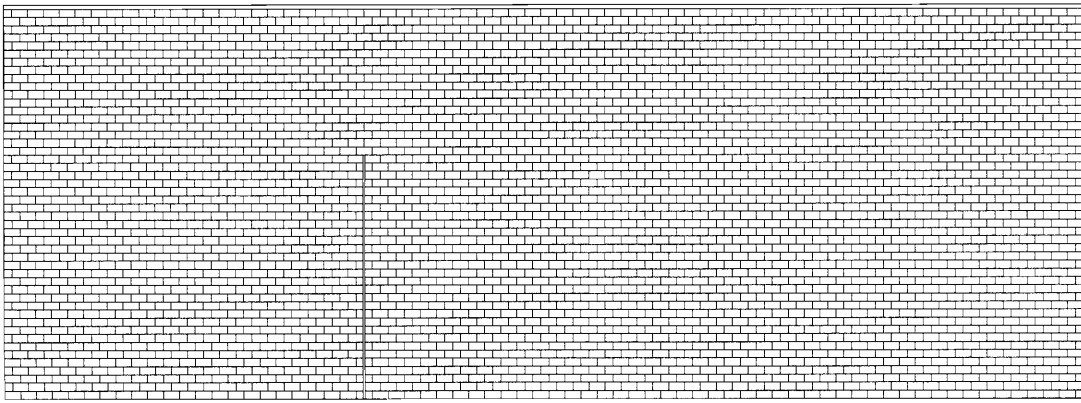
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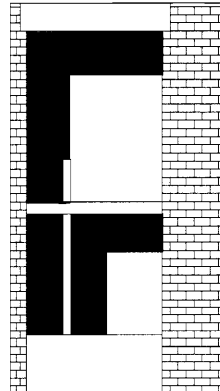
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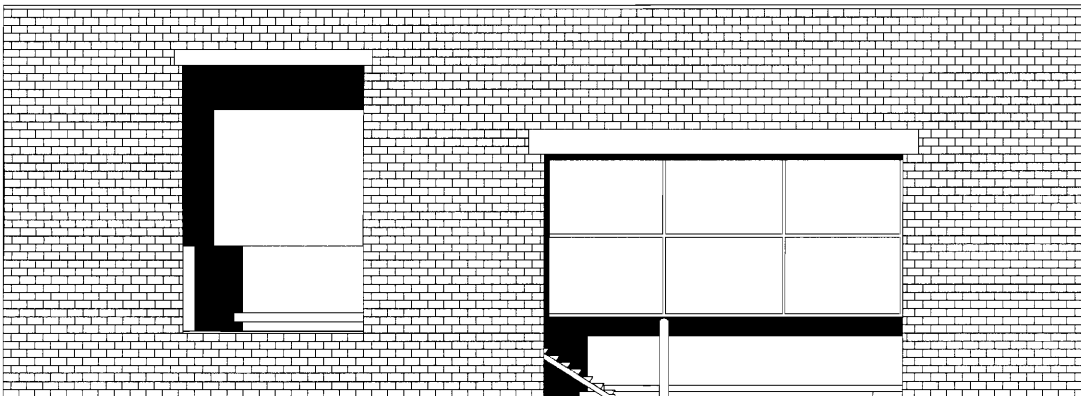
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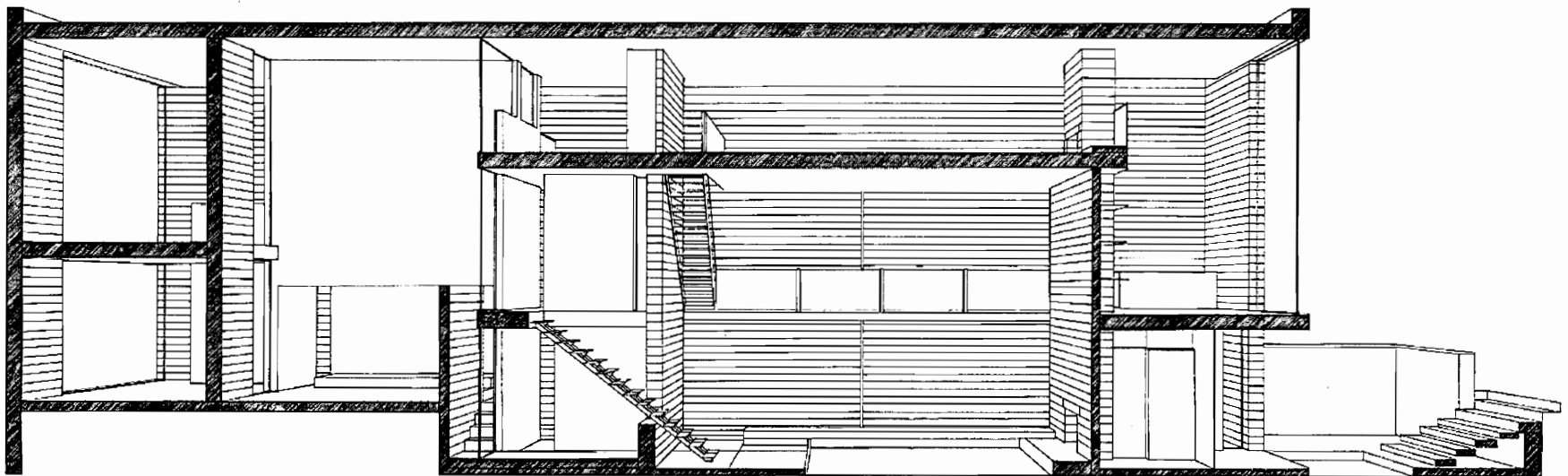
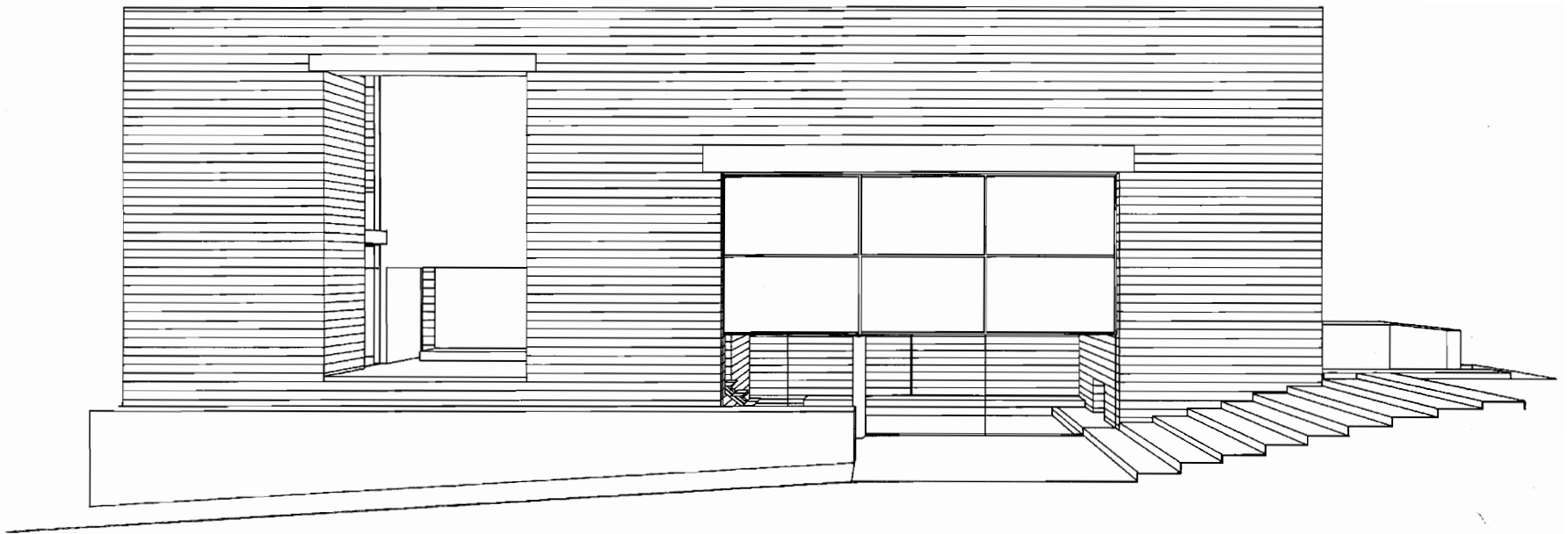
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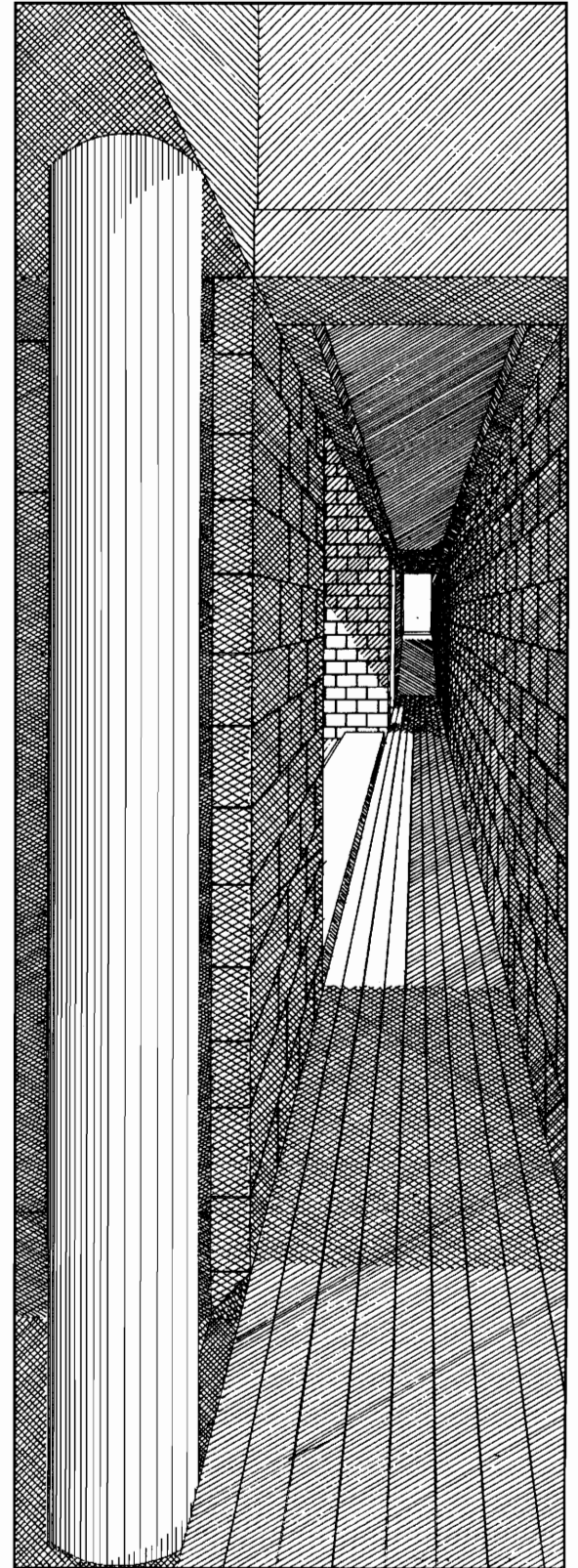
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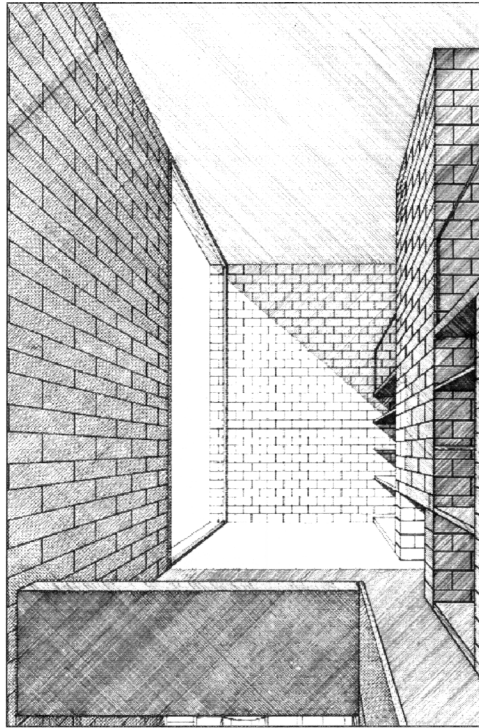
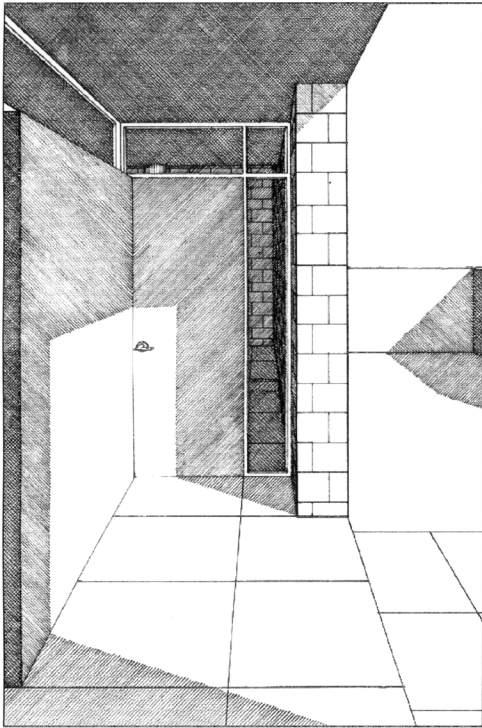
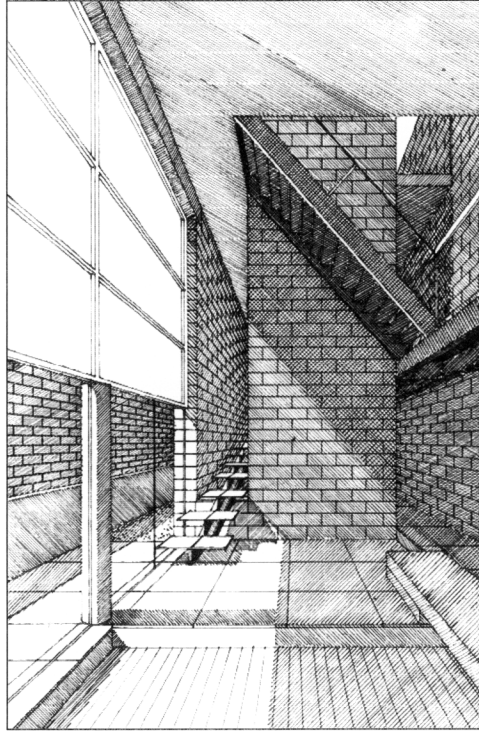
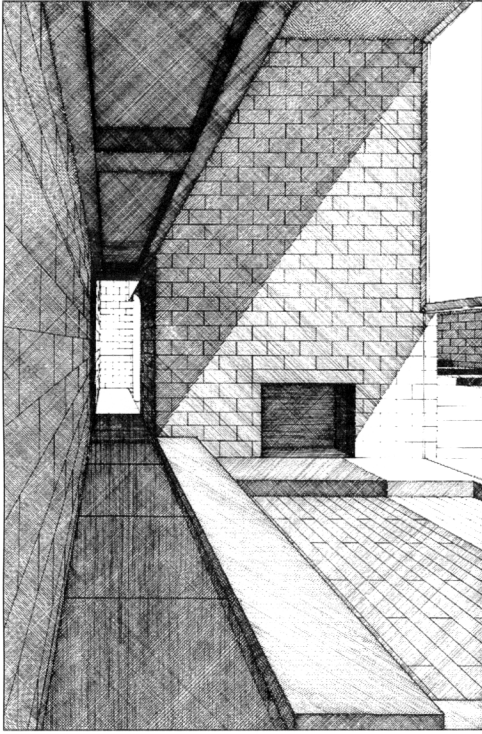
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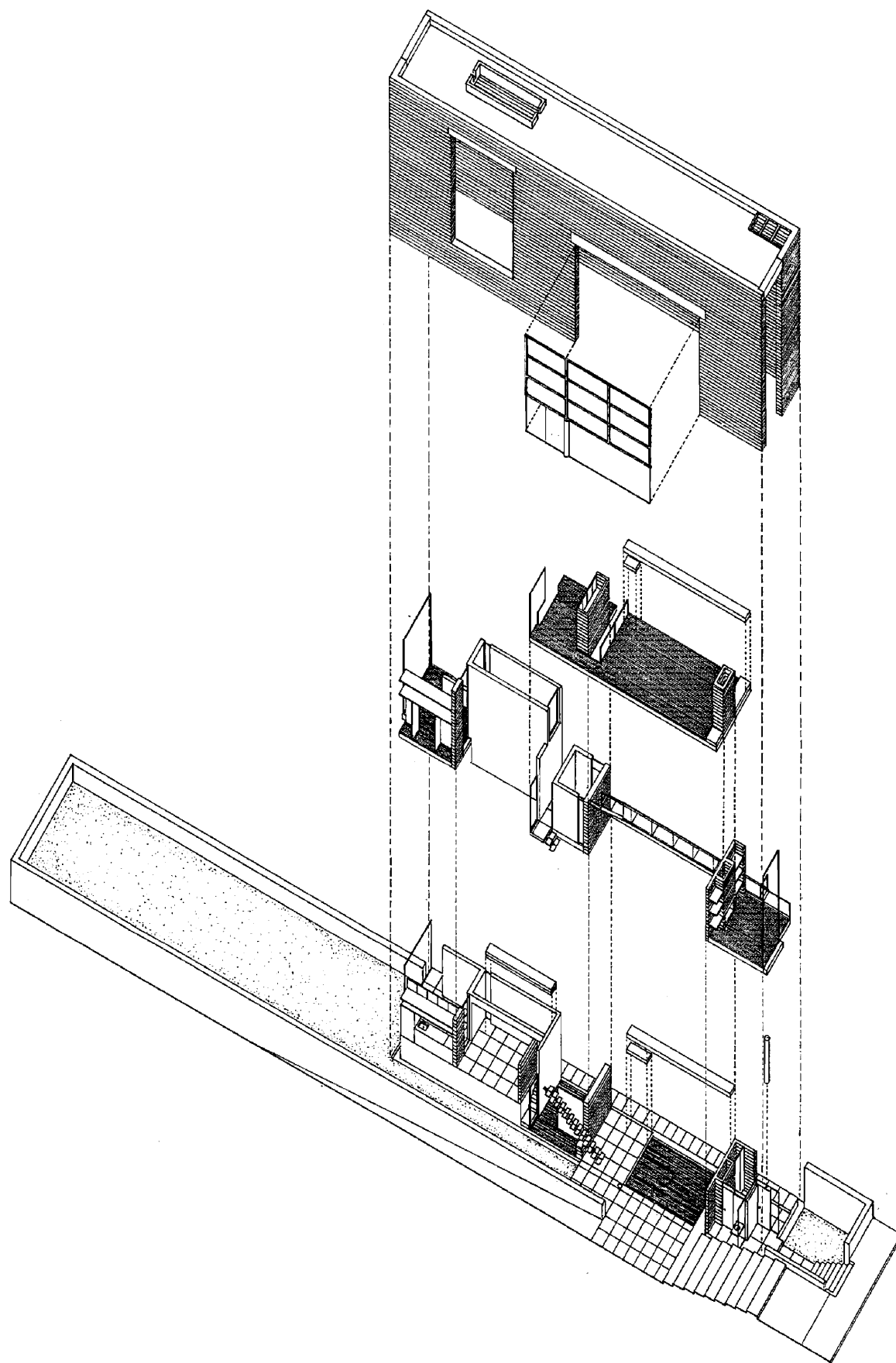
Through rhythm and proportion, a relationship is formed between the rooms creating a harmony between the parts that form the whole.



As one moves through the house, a spatial and experiential complexity is revealed through a rhythm of light and volume.



Each room has unique qualities of volume and light which establish a sense of place within the interior.



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education

Master of Architecture. VPI&SU 1994
Bachelor of Landscape Architecture. VPI&SU 1990

experience

Aldo Rossi/Studio di Architettura New York
August 1994 - present
Lupo/Rowen Architects New York
May 1993 - August 1993

publications

Chaos Garden
Visionary & unbuilt landscapes competition.
Landscape Architecture magazine December 1993